

## Module 4: Adolescent pregnancy - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

Anna Yermachenko

Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Perinatology,  
Donetsk National Medical University, Donetsk, Ukraine

### **Three main factors that contributed to adolescent pregnancy in this case**

1. Lack of education and life experience do not offer an opportunity to make the right decisions at the right time. Adolescents cannot recognize all possible consequences and implications of the childbearing.
2. Family and community do not meet to the needs of adolescents. Based on religious and cultural traditions among many teens, they do not try to delay initiation of sexual activity. The community has a passive position in this matter of adolescent pregnancy prevention.
3. Family financial constraints limit adolescents' access to health care services in developing countries even though they intend to visit a healthcare provider.

### **Family and community preventive actions**

- To promote sex education and open discussion about the consequences of early childbearing on education, earnings, well-being and life options.
- To support a visit to health services for counseling. Teenagers should have full information where and how they can go to get professional counseling about sexual and reproductive health issues.
- To create safe and supportive space for adolescents inside the community without violence and abuse.

### **Ministry of Health's plan of actions**

- To clarify the main factors that lead to adolescents' pregnancy through collecting and analyzing national statistics. To understand weak sides of existing adolescent healthcare service and to work out adequate actions.
- To broaden health workers' knowledge about adolescents' needs.
- To make healthcare services friendly for adolescents. To destroy existing barriers which make healthcare services unavailable and inaccessible for teenagers.

## Adolescent pregnancy as a public health priority in Ukraine

### Background

According to Ukrainian official statistics, 3.2% of all labors related to the 15-17 year old girls; 0.02% are births to adolescents under 15. Despite all attempts to decrease the occurrence of abortion among adolescents, the trend remains steady during the last five years (ca. 3500-4000 per year).

Adolescent pregnancies in the Ukraine, 2007

Age	Labors	Abortions
< 14 years old	106	84
15-17 years old	9548	4000

NGOs insist that the abortion level among adolescents is much higher. Many families choose a private clinic for saving confidentiality; that is why it is difficult to establish precisely the rate of adolescent pregnancies. In the Ukraine, nearly 75% of all pregnant adolescents have an abortion. Every tenth Ukrainian girl under 19 years had an abortion. Thus, adolescent pregnancy becomes a challenge for the Ukrainian healthcare system.

### Implementation of the youth clinics network is an effective instrument to prevent adolescent pregnancies

According to the Ministry of Health directive #604 [http://www.moz.gov.ua/ua/portal/dn\\_20051114\\_604.html](http://www.moz.gov.ua/ua/portal/dn_20051114_604.html) the network of youth clinics was established. Due to great enthusiasm of volunteers and support of governmental and NGOs, knowledge about sexuality it is being disseminated among adolescents in the secondary and high schools. Youth clinics provide high-qualified informational, psychological and medical help among adolescents.

### Including adolescent pregnancies prevention in the national programme “Reproductive Health of the Nation 2006-2015”

One of the main goals of this programme <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=1849-2006-%EF> is prevention of unwanted pregnancies, including adolescent pregnancies. In the framework of this programme the Ministry of Health began active social advertisements of condom use among Ukrainian youth. The knowledge about emergency contraceptive pills is another main task of this programme. Nowadays the public healthcare system sets up a barrier to get counseling about emergency contraception in time and pharmacists are not ready to consult on this issue.

### Free access to healthcare services for pregnant adolescents

The WHO programme “Comprehensive care of unwanted pregnancies” is initiated (2009–2011) <http://www.euro.who.int/en/where-we-work/member-states/ukraine/areas-of-work/mother-and-child-health>. The purpose of this programme is to provide free access to a safe abortion for all women including adolescents. As a result of this programme we expect to have safe reproductive

health care for those adolescents who decide to get an abortion. Thus, Ukrainian teenagers have unrestricted availability of quality abortion services.

Taking into account the high level of pregnancy complications, all adolescent pregnant girls who choose childbearing are concentrated in the regional perinatal centers where they obtain highly qualified medical help. In the postpartum period all young mothers get counseling from health workers about available contraceptive options. Adolescent mothers from low-income families or minority social groups can obtain contraceptives free of charge.

## **Assignment document**

1. [Camacho AV, Chandra-Mouli V. Adolescent pregnancy: a global perspective. Paper presented at: Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research; 2010 Sep 18; Geneva.](#)